

6 March 1972

Dear Senator Gravel,

Per your request levied in our conversation on Friday, 3 March, we have assembled the attached package of background data: A 2 1/2-page compilation of basic data, a chart showing the key players and their significant positions, a list of the PRG governmental hierarchy and a set of brief biographic summaries of persons of special interest or importance. Per the ground rules you established in our 3 March discussion, we would very much appreciate your regarding this material as offered solely for your private use and perusal.

You also asked about reading matter. That is a tricky question. There is, as you know, a veritable library of published material on Vietnam. Most of it, unfortunately, is so highly polemical that it is virtually worthless. Most people who have published material on Vietnam in the past few years are so busily grinding assorted personal and/or ideological axes that they get very careless with the facts and very uncritical in their handling of evidence. There are two books I would recommend if you have time to read them. One is by Donald Lancaster, was published by the Oxford University Press in 1961 and is somewhat misleadingly titled The Emancipation of French Indochina. Actually, this is (in my opinion) far and away the best one volume history of Vietnam available in English. Its author is a somewhat bizarre Englishman, but he has fewer personal or political axes to grind than almost anyone else who has published on this controversial subject. The second is called From Colonialism to Communism (Praeger, 1964), by Houng Van Chi. This is the most thorough study available of the 1953-1956 land reform era in North Vietnam, an understanding of which (again, in my opinion) is central to any balanced appreciation of Vietnamese political dynamics. If you read French, I would also recommend a third book (not available in English) called La Mission de la France En Asie by Frederic Dupont. This work is also mis-titled, since it is actually (or primarily) a detailed study of the 1954 Geneva Conference and the backstage maneuvering of the French government on matters related thereto. I have included in the attached folder two small pieces of my own, which are forwarded not because they have any great literary (or other) merits, but because they cover a fair bit of historical territory in reasonably brief compass. They obviously reflect a point of view (mine), but they represent an honest effort to lay out what, in fact, actually happened.